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Healthnet Newsletter

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New face at Healthnet!

Wendy Urciuoli has taken Judy Kronick's place, and will work with Alberta Richetelle, Healthnet program director. UConn Health librarian, Teri Shiel will provide artistic direction for the newsletter.

Wendy's background includes 12 years as a medical and consumer health librarian at MidState Medical Center in Meriden, and 15 years as a part-time reference librarian at the Welles Turner Library in Glastonbury. Wendy also has experience researching new and emerging health care technologies for Connecticut's insurance industry.

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Health care – are there good apps for that?

Mobile devices may soon become useful tools for managing chronic diseases. Smart phones and tablets offer caregivers and patients text messaging, the ability to quickly look up and share valuable information from the Internet, and the ability to quickly take and send photos and videos. A 2011 review of health apps available from the iTunes store reported the availability of over 350,000 health apps (Hasman, Linda. (2011) An Introduction to Consumer Health Apps for the iPhone, *Journal of Consumer Health on the Internet*, 15(4):322-329). Just the thought of sifting through so many apps would make your head spin. How do you know which are safe, and which really work?

The Food and Drug Administration stepped up to the plate last September announcing that it would be the approving body for mobile health apps that act as medical devices or as accessories to medical devices. However, it would not regulate apps we might use to log health data, retrieve medical content or communicate with clinicians or medical facilities (Bates DW et al. In search of a few good apps. *JAMA*, 311(18):1851, May 14, 2014). This means an app which allows diabetics to track glucose levels and suggest insulin dosages would be regulated. An app which tracks your weight and makes exercise suggestions would not be regulated.

How can you find consumer health apps? A search for health and wellness apps in the iTunes store identifies thousands of apps ranked by how often they are downloaded. The website Quixey.com allows you to quickly search for apps by phone type (platform) for health and wellness apps. Quixey also denotes popularity with star ratings and includes user comments.

Taking a research-based approach to rating healthcare apps, the IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics analyzed the functionality of over 16,000 consumer/patient oriented health, fitness, and medical apps available (as of June 2013) through the iTunes store. They evaluated the functionality of these apps using 25 criteria which included type and quantity of information provided, how the app tracks or captures user data, the communication processes used by the app, and the number of different capabilities offered by the app. Authors of the institutes' report noted that although there are a large number of consumer health apps, most have limited features and usefulness. The Institute's full report, *Patient Apps for Improved Healthcare: From Novelty to Mainstream* is available on their website, <http://tinyurl.com/k3elijdw>. Here are the top apps from this report, can be viewed on page 6 of this newsletter.

New State Law on Observation Status – What does it mean? How could it affect you?

On October 1, 2014, a new state law goes into effect requiring hospitals to give oral and written notice to patients placed on “observation status” for 24 hours or more. The notice must:

1. State that the patient is not admitted to the hospital but is under observation status;
2. State that observation status may affect the patient’s Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance coverage for hospital services, medications, pharmacy supplies, home or community-based care, or care at a skilled nursing facility after the patient’s discharge; and
3. Recommend that the patient contact his/her health insurance provider or the Office of the Healthcare Advocate to fully understand the financial implications of placement on observation status.

Further, the notice must be signed by the patient or his /her legal guardian, conservator or authorized representative.

Why the fuss? Being held for observation is not the same thing as being admitted to the hospital. If you ignore this distinction, you or your family might be faced with a big financial headache! If a patient has not been admitted to the hospital, and upon discharge is moved to a nursing home for full recovery, Medicare will not cover the cost of the nursing home stay. Medicare requires a minimum three-day hospital stay as an inpatient for coverage of nursing home care. Connecticut Congressman Joe Courtney and Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio have introduced bills (H.R. 11779 and S. 569) to count observation status time toward the three-day qualifying hospital stay Medicare requires.

In the meantime, what can patients do if they are told they are being placed on observation status? Try to convince the hospital to change your status, if appropriate. The Center for Medicare Advocacy will help with this process (www.medicareadvocacy.org, Phone: (860) 456-7790. The Center also provides self-help packets for families having issues with observation status (www.medicareadvocacy.org/take-action/self-help-packets-for-medicare-appeals/).

Save money on prescription costs with GoodRx.com

Drug prices are not fixed or regulated in the United States. The same prescription medication can have vastly different prices at pharmacies across town, or even across the street from each other. Two former managers from Yahoo and Facebook have launched an information service, GoodRx which they hope will make prescription drugs easier to afford. GoodRx allows you to quickly compare prices and locate which pharmacy (of 75,000 across the U.S.) has the best price. The site also offers money-saving coupons and tips, and links to federal, state, and manufacturer’s financial assistance programs for prescription drugs. A free mobile app is available for iPhones and Android phones. Owners of other smart phones can access GoodRx through mgoogle.com.



Health careers are H.O.T.!

Many outside of healthcare may not know about Area Health Education Centers or AHECs. AHECs are government funded organizations whose mission is to improve state resident's access to health care. Our Connecticut AHECs are a fabulous resource for students, parents, and adult job seekers considering a career in medicine, public health, and biotechnology. Among AHECs primary objectives is to promote health careers. One of the ways they do this is through the H.O.T. website, www.healthcareersinct.com. H.O.T. stands for Health occupations and technology. The H.O.T. website is a comprehensive online guide to health and biotechnology careers in Connecticut. The site covers 19 career areas, from Behavioral Health to Vision Care. Each area is broken down into separate profiles of specific positions within that field. Environmental Science, for example, covers three specific occupations: Environmental Health Specialist, Environmental Technician, and Industrial Hygienist. Each career profile answers these questions: What will my job be like? Where could I work? What salary could I earn? What is the future for this career? What education and training would I need? Where in Connecticut could I get this education and training? Would I need a license or certification? Where could I go for more information? Although the H.O.T. career profiles are similar to those published in the BLS *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, what makes this resource different, is that the information is specific to Connecticut.

Just google AHEC, hot, and CT and you will quickly find the site. A print copy of the guide is available to purchase for \$15.00. Order forms can be found on the H.O.T. website, www.healthcareersinct.com.



Infection rates for patients hospitalized in Connecticut

Although we may think of hospitals as places where we go to receive treatment and get better, it is possible to become sicker while you are there. An article published in the Hartford Courant earlier this year (Kovner, Josh. Getting sick at the hospital. *Hartford Courant*, March 26, 2014) reported higher than average rates of infection in Connecticut hospitals arising from dirty or improperly inserted central lines and urinary catheters, and following colon surgery and abdominal hysterectomy. The infection rates for these procedures were higher than the national average among hospitals that reported these statistics to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

The Connecticut Department of Public Health conducted its own analysis of the CDC data, and has made their findings available on their website. To view their reports, type: www.ct.gov/dhp/cwp, and in the search box type “healthcare associated infections”. For 2012 (the most current figures available), you can search by hospital for the number of reported hospital-acquired infections. You can also see whether that rate of infection is in the expected range, is worse than expected, or is better than expected.

If you or a loved one must be hospitalized, how can you prevent an unnecessary infection? Probably the most beneficial thing you can do is to be sure that **everyone** entering your room has washed his or her hands. Don’t be shy about asking. Even your doctor might forget to wash his or her hands and needs to be reminded of the importance of doing this.



Top Apps for Healthcare Consumers!

The following are the top-rated apps by healthcare category as chosen by Danbury CT's IMS Health. You can view the full report at www.imshealth.com.

TOP APPS FOR PREVENTION/HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

App Name	Developer	Description
Calorie Counter and Diet Tracker	MyFitnessPal.com	Calorie counts database
Calorie Counter PRO	MyNetDiary Inc.	Calorie counts database
Chest Trainer: Powered by Fitness Buddy	Azumio Inc.	Weight training and fitness app.
Cycle Tracker Pro-Training Peaks GPS	Peakware, LLC	Converts phone into a GPS-enabled cycling computer
Quit It 3.0 Stop Smoking	Tommy Kammerer	Motivational program. Tracks cigarettes not smoked and money saved.
Quit Smoking Now HD—Hypnotherapy with Max Kirsten	Max Kirsten	Four-week smoking cessation program.



TOP APPS FOR STICKING TO CARE PLAN



App Name	Developer	Description
Dosecast	Montuno Software, LLC	Flexible medication reminder with customizable doses and instructions. Database of drugs.
Pill Monitor Free—Medication Reminders and Logs	Maxwell Software	Reminds user every time they need to take a prescription. Tracks when drugs have been taken.
RemindMe Prescription/Medicine Reminder and Pill Tracker	RxmindMe, LLC	Reminds user to take prescriptions.

Top Apps for Healthcare Consumers!

Continued from page 5.

TOP APPS FOR PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

App Name	Developer	Description
GoodRx	GoodRx	Compares prescription drug prices, offers coupons and savings tips.
MyRefillRx	Intelecare Compliance Solutions, Inc.	Order medications by phone with delivery to your door.
Walgreens	Walgreen Co.	Refill by scan function. Points for refills. Refill reminders and more.

TOP APPS FOR FINDING A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

App Name	Developer	Description
Healow	eClinicalWorks	Patients can communicate with their provider's office and access current health records.
Vitals—Your Top 10 Doctors!	Vitals	Builds customized lists of best local doctors based on patient ratings.
ZocDoc—Doctor Appointments Online!	ZocDoc	Find and book doctor's appointments based on zipcode searches.

TOP APPS FOR DIAGNOSIS AND EDUCATION

App Name	Developer	Description
HealthTap	HealthTap	Health answers and healthy tips.
iTriage	Healthagen LLC	Clear, concise, useful information on thousands of medical symptoms, diseases, etc.
WebMD for iPad	WebMD	Mobile-optimized health information.

Book Review: *Caring for Connecticut's Children: A Handbook for Parents and Caregivers of Young Children* - New second edition available!

How often we hear parents lament, "I wish my baby came with instructions." In the absence of a newborn "care tag", the next best thing may be this free, two-volume handbook from the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut (CHDI), now in its second edition. The book is described as "the manual for parents that should accompany every newborn in Connecticut". It offers a concise overview and best practices on important early childhood topics including health, safety, physical, intellectual, and emotional development for children from birth through age five. Sprinkled throughout the handbook are: creative tips, new research, little known facts, important things to remember, warnings and sources for additional information on a topic.

Print copies of the handbook are FREE, and can be ordered from the Connecticut Clearinghouse by calling 800-232-4424. The handbook may also be downloaded free of charge by going to www.chdi.org, under "Publications". CHDI is a subsidiary of the Children's Fund of Connecticut, a non-profit organization which promotes the healthy physical, behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social development of Connecticut's children.

Share your thoughts...

What topics would you like to see covered in *Healthnet News*? Are there health questions you are uncomfortable answering, or an information service your library is ill-equipped to provide? Do you see a role for your library in helping to tackle a community health problem? How can Healthnet best support public libraries in Connecticut?

These are questions I've been pondering as I try to fill the very large shoes left by my predecessor Judy Kronick. What are the health and wellness issues that are important to you, the library staff and the communities you serve? To try to answer these questions I will be e-mailing your library a survey about Healthnet. Please use it to share your ideas, concerns, and comments about our service. The survey will also include questions about your library's role (real or hoped for) in improving the health of your communities. Of course, if you have an idea that just can't wait, send me an email today.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Cheers!

Wendy

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